



self-defense, which was provoked by the Passover massacre, which was provoked by a series of suicide bombings.

I didn't heard my colleague, Ambassador Abdel Rahman, deploring the fact that Israelis were killed, dozens and dozens of Israelis. I do understand the suffering of the Palestinian people, but he also has with his leadership to internalize the Israeli suffering. We're going to withdraw. We're not defying neither the president of the United States, nor the Security Council, but we are now in the midst of the dismantling of the terrorist network...

WHITFIELD: All right, Mr. Rahman, let me ask you real quick because we're running out of time, do you believe that the military incursions have in any way helped launch the Palestinian militants into a new stage of planning?

RAHMAN: No, this is really not an attack against any particular group. It is an attack against all the Palestinian people. Mr. Sharon has two objectives. One is to dismantle the Palestinian National Authority. Second, he wants to defeat the Palestinian people and afflict as much damage on the Palestinian community as possible.

WHITFIELD: OK.

RAHMAN: What he is doing is really he's turning more Palestinians to be extremist because this pain and suffering that is inflicted on the Palestinian people has one effect, and that is Palestinians become more angry, more frustrated and more desperate.

WHITFIELD: OK, we're running out of time. Thank you very much, gentlemen, **Hasan Abdel Rahman**, the Palestinian representative to the U.S. in Washington, and Yehuda Lancry, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, joining us from New York. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

RAHMAN: Thank you.

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HEADLINE: Hassan Abdel Rahman and Zalman Shoval discuss the crisis in the Middle East

BODY:

MR. RUSSERT: And we are back. Welcome both to MEET THE PRESS. Ambassador Shoval, why won't Prime Minister Sharon listen to President Bush and heed his request to stop the incursion and pull back?

MR. ZALMAN SHOVAL: Well, he certainly listens to him. And he has promised as Sharon said, "We're going to expedite the mission of the incursion," as you call it, "as soon as possible." We're going to consult with the president, with the secretary coming to Israel, but, you know, we don't want to do this again. We would like this operation to have as many results as possible. We don't want to be put in the position where we withdraw, suicide bombings go on, Palestinian terrorism resumes, and in a few weeks from now, we have to do this over again. And so we'd like to stop this as soon as possible as is appropriate, and I think that's what we're going to do.

MR. RUSSERT: The president said, "Now, without delay." You're not going to do that?

MR. SHOVAL: Well, I don't want to say, you know, what is a delay. We don't

want to delay. We don't want to delay. I mean, you know, we are an army of reservists. My son is in the army right now. We want them back home. We want our kids back home as soon as possible. We are not going to delay.

MR. RUSSERT: But you cannot continue this activity until Colin Powell arrives in Israel, can you?

MR. SHOVAL: Well, he's going to arrive pretty soon. I think we just heard the secretary. These are things he's going to talk about with the prime minister. We're talking about, you know, days till he comes there.

MR. RUSSERT: You would stop it for his arrival at least?

MR. SHOVAL: Well, I don't know. This is a military and political decision, not for me to take, but as I said, we don't want to have an extra moment of a military activity there if we can do without it. There's no doubt about it.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Rahman, you heard Secretary of State Powell say that Yasser Arafat should get on television, take advantage of this opportunity now to issue in Arabic a plea to all his people to stop terrorism, stop suicide bombing now.

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MR. **HASAN ABDEL RAHMAN**: You know, the Palestinian people have been living under legal military occupation for 35 years. It is the longest military occupation in history. There are fully 100,000 Jewish settlers who illegally settled in the Palestinian territories. In the eyes of the Palestinian people, this illegal military occupation is a systematic, constant terror directed against them and against their lives because it steals from them their dignity, their livelihood. This is in our view the problem that faces our relations with Israel. It is the occupation. In the last 10 days, we have a war carried on by Israel against all of the Palestinian people. This is not a police operation. This is a war conducted by the largest military in the Middle East and probably one of the largest in the world. The victims so far has been over 250 Palestinians killed, many of them are children and women. You have hundreds of wounded who are not being even aided because Israel stops the...

MR. RUSSERT: What about the victims of the Passover dinner? The Israelis that were...

MR. RAHMAN: Yes, we always condemned that. And President Arafat himself went on television immediately after, condemned and he promised to arrest anyone who is involved in that operation.

MR. RUSSERT: It is not lost on anyone that the suicide bombings have stopped since the Israelis went into certain areas and tried to root out the terrorists.

MR. RAHMAN: But I assure you, Tim, that this operation is turning the Palestinians much more hard, to become harder, and more extreme. Because so much pain and suffering--when you have people, civilians, for 10 days are under a state of siege and a curfew. You cannot buy milk for your children. Palestinians are herded into detention camp by the hundreds. Civilians are being at--homes are being demolished.

MR. RUSSERT: Are you suggesting that we're creating a whole new generation of suicide bombers?

MR. RAHMAN: Absolutely.

MR. RUSSERT: A whole new generation of suicide bombers?

MR. RAHMAN: If--let me--what I'm saying is if this continues and there's no hope for the Palestinian people to be able to live free like Americans are and like Israelis are, then what Israel is doing is really creating much more extremism and much more desperation in our region.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Shoval?

MR. SHOVAL: Well, you know, we are not free because we are not free from the threat of terror every day. Not just for the last 10 days and not just for the

last few months. There is a campaign of terror and murder. As the president said, "These are not martyrs. These are murderers, killing--targeting children, women, elderly people."

But Mr. Abdel Rahman and I--you know, we have been doing this for 12 years on and off, he and I. And what have these 12 years brought you? I've served under four different prime ministers, including Rabin. Six prime ministers since Oslo
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have offered compromise to the Palestinians. You might have had your statehood by now. Instead, you responded with terrorism. You responded with violence.

You have a difficult job, I realize that. But when is there going to be a Palestinian leadership which will say, "We want to live in peace with Israel. We want to compromise." But compromise has to be a two-way street. That is Israel's position all along. Or every prime minister, whether it was Shamir or whether it was Rabin or whether it was Peres or whether it was Netanyahu, indeed, Sharon, as well--we are not the enemies of the Palestinian people. We and the Americans, I think, are enemies of those who have decided that terrorism is the weapon to achieve political ends.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Shoval, let me show you a map of Israel, and I'll put it on the screen. And you'll see in the red is Israel proper, if you will. The orange areas--the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip--are the so-called occupied territories, the land that Israel won in wars. Would Israel be willing to stop all settlements in that orange-shaded area as President Bush has requested?

MR. SHOVAL: Well, you know, this is part of the Mitchell plan. In stage three of the Mitchell plan, there's confidence-building measures. When they're met, Israelis settlements will be on the table. This is one of the things which is going to be discussed.

MR. RUSSERT: Would you be willing to withdraw completely from those occupied territories in terms of a peace agreement?

MR. SHOVAL: I don't think so. You'll remember President Reagan said that where Israel was all eight miles wide then, this very narrow waist, Israel could have been cut in two in 1967. People forget, "Why are we in the territories?" Because we were attacked.

MR. RUSSERT: So which territories would you want to keep?

MR. SHOVAL: I'm not going to specify that. And I wouldn't be able to specify that. But I'd say that settlements will not prevent reaching a peace treaty with the Palestinians, because they are not going to necessarily say where the border, the future border, is going to be. That is part of the negotiations.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Rahman, it's been widely reported that President Clinton brought together Prime Minister Barak and Mr. Arafat, Israelis agreed to give 95 percent of the occupied territories to the Palestinians and 5 percent of Israeli land to compensate for the 5 percent of the occupied territories they wanted to keep for some settlements. And they also agreed to allow the flag, the Palestinian flag, to fly over East Jerusalem, even though the city would be undivided. And Yasser Arafat said no.

MR. RAHMAN: Tim, first of all, this was not the offer that was made at Camp David. The offer that was made at Camp David would provide the Palestinians with 88 percent of the West Bank. And the 12 percent would be the Jewish settlements and the territories, in the Palestinian territories, and would be the aquifers, water aquifers, in the north and the south, and the borders with Jordan. In other words, what Israel offered at Camp David were three Bantustans that were unconnected. And we did not end the negotiations in Camp David. We
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continued the negotiations through January with the Israelis, and we made a great deal of progress until Mr. Sharon went to al-Haram al-Sharif with 1,000 armed men and provoked Palestinians, and even then the Palestinians did not respond violently to Israel.

MR. RUSSERT: OK, OK, what do you want? What do the Palestinians want?

MR. RAHMAN: We want a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza within the 1967 boundaries, which constitutes only 22 percent of historic Palestine; Palestine, in which I was born.

MR. RUSSERT: So let me put the map up. You want all those orange areas that are labeled West Bank and Gaza Strip.

MR. RAHMAN: Which is only 22 percent.

MR. RUSSERT: But that's what you, you want it all, you want it all?

MR. RAHMAN: Yes. Absolutely.

MR. RUSSERT: Is that doable, Ambassador?

MR. SHOVAL: I think this will have to be negotiated. We're not getting into percentages right now because I could make a case that Israel is only 20 percent of what originally the Balfour declaration has promised but this is really--any--we shouldn't really start with that. What is on the table is that Israel wants to make peace with the Palestinians. And I think that once we sit down with a responsible leadership, not the sort of leadership that President Bush has spoken about, when he said Arafat has betrayed the hopes of his own people. If there will be responsible leaders--believe me, I negotiated with Palestinians, I negotiated with the Jordanians. We came to an agreement. I was involved in the negotiations with the Egyptians. We came to an agreement. Unless Arafat understands that this conflict has to end--you know why he broke up the Camp David talks with Barak? Because he didn't want to sign an agreement which said, "End of conflict." The next morning the violence started. Barak was prime minister, not Sharon.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me show you, Mr. Rahman, what Yasser Arafat said, according to USA Today, in a televised address Saturday. This was right after--"as Palestinian terrorists launched suicide attacks in Netanya and Jerusalem, Arafat urged Palestinians to 'sacrifice themselves as martyrs in jihad (holy war) for Palestine," encouraging, in effect, suicide bombers. Let me just make this point.

MR. RAHMAN: Now...

MR. RUSSERT: Because it is very important. Then we read this, that the Iraqis changed their policy. "Under the new Iraqi payscale, decided on March 12, during an Arab conference in Baghdad, the families of gunmen [and others] who die fighting the Israelis will still receive \$10,000, while the relatives of suicide bombers will get \$25,000," an incentive, if you will, to upgrade yourself from a gunman to a suicide bomber. People should know that 50 percent, as you well know--50 percent of the Palestinian people live on \$2 a day, \$700 a year. Along come the Iraqis and say, "We'll give you 35 years' salary, just

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give--make one of your children a suicide bomber," and Yasser Arafat goes on TV and says, "Martyrs for jihad." What kind of leadership is that?

MR. RAHMAN: Tim, don't you think that this implication that we sell our lives for \$25,000, and we sell our children for \$10,000, is absolutely racist? Don't you think that we value our lives and the lives of our children like everybody else does?

MR. RUSSERT: Then why is Yasser Arafat saying, "Sacrifice yourself as a martyr to jihad"?

MR. RAHMAN: Wasn't Patrick Henry who said, "Give me liberty or death"? Why in America there are so many bumper stickers saying, "Live free or die," but Yasser Arafat cannot tell his people live free or die? Aren't we entitled to live as a free people? Can't we defend our country and our nation from an illegal, brutal foreign occupation like the Israeli brutal occupation of our people, who has denied us our very basic liberties and freedoms? I, **Hasan Abdel Rahman**, have been in exile for 29 years. My father and mother died and I was unable to attend their funerals.

MR. RUSSERT: Why not do it at the peace table...

MR. RAHMAN: We were...

MR. RUSSERT: ...rather than through suicide bombings?

MR. RAHMAN: We want to, but the Israeli army is continuing to humiliate us; continuing--listen, in the last year alone, Mr. Tim, there were 34 Jewish settlements built under Mr. Sharon. Those are the statistics of the State Department. Anyone who wants to make peace with the Palestinians would not conduct the kind of war that Mr. Sharon is conducting today at the Palestinian people. He wants to break the will of the Palestinian people. And the Palestinian people understand that. Mr. Sharon wants to change the political landscape. This is not a police operation. This is a colonial war, and it has to be understood as such.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Shoval, there's been some interesting evolution in thinking. People in Israel were once opposed to a Palestinian state. Now they embrace the notion. Nine years ago, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was on this very program, and I asked him the following question:

(Videotape, September 12, 1993):

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Prime Minister, on Thursday, Yasser Arafat said the Palestinian state is at hand and the Palestinian flag will soon fly over Jerusalem. Is that accurate?

PRIME MIN. YITZHAK RABIN: Well, we are negotiating now only the interim agreement, and I assure Chairman Arafat that the Palestinian flag will not be over Jerusalem. Jerusalem will remain always united, under Israel's sovereignty, and our capital forever, the capital of Israel, the capital of the Jewish people. He can forget about it.

(End videotape)

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MR. RUSSERT: Now, Israelis seem willing to allow the Palestinian flag to fly over at least East Jerusalem, if it was part of a peace agreement, correct?

MR. SHOVAL: You know, the late Moshe Dayan said over 20 years ago, "If the Arab world comes to peace with Israel, real peace, there can be 20 Arab flags flowing and diplomatic flags in East Jerusalem." And I think what Mr. Rabin--the late Mr. Rabin said, is still true, in the sense that, you know, I might quote Mr. Peres, who said, "When Jesus walked in the streets of Jerusalem, what he saw on the Temple Mount was not the al-Aqsa mosque; he saw the Jewish temple." And--but this doesn't mean that we cannot come to an accommodation with Islam, not just the Palestinians, but with the Islamic world about their holy places. We don't want to run their holy places. This is not our business at all.

MR. RUSSERT: How do we get a cease-fire now?

MR. SHOVAL: If America will make it very clear--and I think that's the mission of Secretary Powell--to tell the Palestinians, "Look, you're going to blow it. You're going to lose everything you have already achieved over the last 10 or 20 years. You won't have a Palestinian state, unless you come to peace with Israel." I think President Bush said that a few days ago. The only chance for Palestinian statehood is in peace with Israel. Unless they do that,

the Palestinian people are going to continue to suffer, and they suffer. Mr. Abdel Rahman is right. They suffer mainly because of the mistaken policies of their leadership. I think if the Palestinians--leaders will understand that, there's a chance. There is no certainty, and I'll tell you why, because there are those on the Palestinian side who think that suicide bombings have worked, that they may hurt us, that maybe they're delaying American plans with regards to Iraq and so on and so forth. Hopefully, they will see better sense. Hopefully, but, I'm not, you know, I'm not convinced.

MR. RUSSERT: Is the dream of a free, vibrant, independent Jewish state vanishing?

MR. SHOVAL: No, I don't think so. I think our war for independence is still going on because on the other side, there are people who want to deny our independence, they want to deny us the right of having a Jewish state in that part. But Israel is strong, fortunately, and we will overcome that. Ultimately, the Middle East will be at peace because there is no alternative to either side.

MR. RUSSERT: Will the Israeli Cabinet allow Colin Powell to visit Yasser Arafat, if he wants to?

MR. SHOVAL: I don't know. I don't know. I've heard Colin Powell just say that he would like probably to meet Arafat and that's something the government will have to decide. I don't know.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Rahman, same question to you. What must be done for a cease-fire to be agreed to in the Middle East?

MR. RAHMAN: First of all, Israel implements resolutions of the Security Council, 1402, 1403, which President Bush reiterated to Mr. Sharon. They must halt the onslaught on the Palestinians immediately of the Israeli army and then we will reach a cease-fire and implement the Tenet and Mitchell but there has to be a light at the end of the tunnel. In other words, the Palestinian people
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must see that this disgusting occupation, illegal occupation of our territory must come to an end.

MR. RUSSERT: If Colin Powell says as a condition for him to meet with Yasser Arafat, Mr. Arafat must go on TV this week and say in Arabic, "Stop the suicide bombing, stop terrorism," will he do it?

MR. RAHMAN: I don't know, but let me say this. As long as the Palestinian people are being subjected to this military attack by the Israelis, I think it is very, very hard for any Palestinian leader to tell the Palestinians don't defend yourself. Remember that the tanks are in the streets of Nablus and Ramallah and the helicopters are shelling the refugee camps in Jenin and it is not vice versa. We are not shelling Tel Aviv and not are not in the streets of Haifa. They are in our streets. They are attacking us and we are defending ourselves. Once they withdraw, I assure you that we are very eager to reach a cease-fire. But let me say one thing also. You know, the Arab world put an initiative on the table. And that is 22 countries, normal relations in exchange for full Israeli withdrawal. I think this is the challenge for Israel.

MR. RUSSERT: To be continued. Ambassador Shoval, Mr. Rahman...

MR. RAHMAN: Thank you.

MR. SHOVAL: Thank you so much.

MR. RAHMAN: Thank you, sir.

MR. RUSSERT: Thank you very much.

And we'll be right back.

(Announcements)

MR. RUSSERT: We'll be right back after this station break.

(Announcements)

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